US outraged by ‘antisemitic, anti-Israel’ rhetoric by UN investigator

July 28, 2022

By Tovah Lazaroff

The Jerusalem Post

<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-713395>

US envoys said they were “outraged” by the antisemitic and anti-Israel sentiments [UN human rights investigator Miloon Kothari](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-713126) expressed in an interview he gave earlier this week.

Meirav Eilon Shahar, Israel’s ambassador to the UN in Geneva, called for Kothari to be ousted from his position on the three-member UN Human Rights Commission of Inquiry tasked with investigating allegations of [Israeli human rights abuses](https://www.jpost.com/bds-threat/article-712721).

In an interview with the website *Mondoweiss*, Kothari spoke against Israel’s status as one of 193 UN members. “I would go as far as to raise the question of why are they [Israel] even a member of the UN,” he said.

He then used a classic antisemitic trope saying, “We are very disheartened by the social media that is controlled largely by – whether it is the Jewish lobby or specific NGOs.”

Linda Thomas Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN, said, “there should be no place for such antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment at the UN,” and that these remarks “cannot go unaddressed.”

**Antisemitism envoy blasts "outrageous" comments**

[Deborah E. Lipstadt](https://www.jpost.com/jerusalem-report/article-713190), US special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, said the remarks were “outrageous,” particularly from an appointed member of a Commission of Inquiry.

Israel and the US had been opposed to the COI from the start, particularly given its unusual nature as a permanent open-ended probe, as opposed to most COIs, which have fixed investigatory periods.

Israel in particular had already feared that the COI would investigate it for the crime of apartheid with an eye toward ousting it from the UN.

Kothari’s comments, including his assertion that the COI would be looking at the apartheid issue, appeared to validate those fears.

Michele Taylor, US ambassador to the UNHRC, said that Kothari’s words “sadly exacerbate our deep concerns about the open-ended nature and overly broad scope of the COI and the HRC’s disproportionate and biased treatment of Israel.”

A spokesperson for the UNHRC clarified that the body’s president had the power to appoint COI members, but lacked the authority to remove them.

“The president cannot remove members of these bodies given their independence,” the spokesperson said. “The only way a member may leave his/her position is if they choose to do so on their own accord.”

**Navi Pillay joins support for Kothari**

COI chair Navi Pillay, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, wrote a letter in defense of Kothari, clarifying that Israel’s status as a UN member state is not in question.

The COI “does not question the status for UN membership of either of the concerned states of its mandate. The foundations for the legality of the State of Israel, alongside that of the State of Palestine, were laid out by General Assembly Resolution 181 and are not and never will be in question by this Commission.”